

CANOES

City of Seattle Native American Employees

September 2, 2010

John Diaz, Chief of Police
Seattle Police Department
PO Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Re: **Fatal Shooting of Native American First Nations Nitanat carver and band member John T. Williams**

Dear Chief Diaz:

The City of Seattle Native American Employees Association (CANOEES) are writing you to express our serious concerns over the fatal shooting of John T. Williams on August 31, 2010 by Officer Ian Birk and the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) handling of the matter. CANOEES represent and advocates for the City's many Native American employees and their families.

John T. Williams, a Native American First Nations Nitanat carver and band member was a member of the Chief Seattle Club in downtown Seattle and well-known in the Native American community. Regardless of his economic, physical or emotional condition, he did not deserve to have his life taken in such a brutal manner. We believe that the Native American community in Seattle deserves honest answers and accountability from SPD and the City regarding the fatal shooting.

We believe that you are serious about accountability, de-escalation tactics, and improving relationships between SPD and people of color communities in Seattle, including the homeless and disabled communities of which John T. Williams belonged. We know that you will do the right thing by ensuring that SPD, the Firearms Review Board and the Office of Professional Accountability Review Board will conduct a thorough, honest, and open review of the incident.

SPD has the responsibility to treat all citizens with fairness, respect and value. Please bear in mind that many in the Native community believe that this is not an isolated incident and that there has been a persistent and historic mistreatment of Natives by SPD. We are open to a dialogue to foster a better relationship to the extent we can while following the wisdom and direction of our own leaders and the Williams family.

Please respond to this letter by letting us know how SPD plans to proceed with the investigation of Officer Birk's actions, the appointment of a Citizen Observer to the Firearms Review Board, and if SPD intends to review its current policies of engagement. Thank you for your timely response.

Sincerely,



Pamela Masterman-Stearns

CANOES President

<http://seattle.gov/CANOES>

(206) 388-6630

Cc: Mayor Mike McGinn
Councilman Tim Burgess, Chair, Public Safety & Education Committee
Councilman Bruce Harrell, Chair, Energy, Technology, & Civil Rights Committee
Seattle Council Members
Darryl Smith, Deputy Mayor of Community
Julie Nelson, Director, Office for Civil Rights
Jenine Grey, Executive Director, Chief Seattle Club